

150 DRAFT.

. (FAKE DAD)

Dear Vanessa and friends,

I am offering a free consultation to you on the subject of editing. I don't expect you to follow my advice but nevertheless feel it is my duty to give you at least a fighting chance to make some of the last cartoons work. Not because I have any desire to see you succeed, in fact one side of me is quite enjoying how quickly the series is deteriorating without Spumco's involvement. On the other hand, a lot of very talented people worked very hard on some of these cartoons (some now at Games) and it is truly a crime to see that work so casually destroyed. To be blunt, the editing on the last of the real Ren & Stimpy shows is pitifully amateurish and I find it hard to believe that you would purposely cheat both the the audience and your own artists even out of spite.

Editing is a skill that requires sensitivity to story structure, character motivation and pacing. The purpose of editing is to preserve and enhance a film's story and theme, not to change it and certainly not to distract attention away from it. Even more important, the editing process should make the story understandable to the audience. It should help convey the meaning of the story, it should make it easy for the audience to follow what's going on. If the audience can't follow what's happening, it doesn't matter how beautiful the artwork is, or even how clever the storyline is!

And yet in almost all of the cartoons that have aired since Spumco was removed from the process, the editing has been treated as if it

were not a vital element of the story but a competing element. The storylines are very hard to follow. The soundtracks are noisy and distracting. It's as if someone who doesn't care about the stories as written is trying to make his own creative stamp by making a wacky sound track. Luckily for you, the Ren & Stimpy audience likes to go back and freeze-frame the cartoons and so have a chance to figure out what's happening. But when the stories disintegrate next year, they won't even do that. Many of you already see the problem (certainly your artists do) but don't know what to do about it. I noticed you even tried to do something about "Sven Hoek". Isn't it frustrating when you try to fix something and then it's still screwed-up? This is not a job that can just be handed out to anyone in line for a promotion

HERE ARE SOME TIPS

Let me use Fake-Dad as an example. I urge you to save this cartoon. We viewed this cartoon last week, just a Picture-cut, no SFX, no music, no mix. THIS IS WHERE YOUR PROBLEMS START. "Fake-Dad" is without a doubt (and all who have seen it agree, even your own employees) the worst most amateurish Picture-Cut you've produced to date.

PICTURE-CUT

The cut of the film is the most important step in the editing process. Every other step of the process depends on the cut film. A sound FX editor, a music editor, a sound mixer can't do anything without a good cut that anticipates their needs.

When watching a rough cut of a cartoon (or film) a good

director and editor will watch the silent film while imagining the music and sound effects in their heads. They don't cut the film, then worry about the sound. They have to anticipate what is going to happen later. When a layman watches a rough cut she\he has a tough time imagining the finished product. I'm sure you all will admit to how much richer my final films were than my rough-cuts. Could anyone have imagined the finished "Stimpy's Big Day" working after we saw the God-awful rough-cut come in?

The first thing one notices when watching a rough-cut is how slow the picture seems. The natural tendency for a layman, amateur or beginning director is to cut out the pauses or holds to make the picture speed up. This is a huge mistake. This is why directors are reluctant to show rough-cuts to executives who will tell them to arbitrarily cut out huge chunks of time and storytelling.

PACING

The timing of a picture needs contrasts. Some story points need longer to register than others. ALL points need some time to register. The balancing of these periods of time in order to control the unfolding of the story is called pacing. When you treat each story point with the same emphasis or length of time as the next point, then you have no pacing whatsoever. Even worse, is when you leave no time at all for an idea to register. Then the audience doesn't see the point or if it does, is just confused by it. This happens all the way thru Sven Hoek; the ball of Band-aids, the weird expressions on Sven & Stimpy in the closet scene, the threatening gestures on Ren at the end of the cartoon; all this wonderful weird

stuff loses most of its impact simply because its not on long enough for people to register it. These bits of time that seem slow at the rough cut stage are called Holds. This is not a new invention from Spumco. Warner Bros. cartoons use them, Tex Avery cartoons use them, Disney uses them. Stand-up Comedians use them, they call it "Comic-Timing". Comedians don't just tell a string of jokes, they pause for emphasis or to let a joke sink in. If a comic stood up and told you his best jokes all in a row, without timing you wouldn't laugh, you wouldn't even be able to follow him. Yet that is what's happening with the Ren & Stimpy Show. And the worst offender to date is "Fake-Dad".

Vanessa, after all the work we put into rewriting and reboarding "Fake-Dad" in order to put in all the warmth to balance out Ren's aggression, why cut it so badly as to make all the story and character motivations barely comprehensible? Ren and Kowalski go thru a wide range of emotional changes in this cartoon. This is a very sophisticated story for a cartoon. It's exactly what you and Will said you wanted from the R & S Show, sophisticated character motivated stories; you didn't want generic cartoon premises about Ren & Stimpy in a monkey-cage.

Everything you said you wanted in this story is gone now, because we never get a chance to feel what the characters are feeling about each other, simply because their expressions are not on the screen long enough. Sophisticated stories require sophisticated execution. You can have the best written story in the world but if it is poorly executed, no one will give a damn. There

is a lot of sophisticated execution in the cartoon, the drawings, the colors, the staging. Everything we handed you was sweated over by dedicated artists who were trying to make you happy. This picture-cut kills 80% of that work. Not to mention the money wasted! You paid for a 1/2 hr cartoon and then on a whim decide to cut it in half! 2-3 hundred thousand dollars down the drain on a whim?

ESTABLISHING SHOTS

Establishing shots are called establishing shots because they are supposed to establish something, either a Location, a Mood, or usually both. Est. shots should be on for between 5-10, sometimes 20 feet, depending on how complex the information in the shot or how complex the mood you want to establish. "Fake-Dad" has establishing shots on for 2 and 4 feet! Two feet does not establish anything! You can barely see a BG in 2 feet.

In the sc. where we see Kowalski at home for the first time we show 2 shots, one outside showing the familiar trailer, one inside showing Ren, Stimpy and Kowalski on a cozy sofa while Ren stirs up icing. I put these scenes in the picture specifically for you Vanessa, to establish that Ren and Kowalski were really going to make a go of having a happy family life. I timed the shots to music, 10 ft per shot to coincide with the song "There's no place like home". Two verses of it with a long slow X-dissolve between the verses and shots. This slow, lazy set-up would perfectly establish the calm mood that for all Ren's best intentions would be so catastrophically be destroyed later on in the story. Once the

music is played over the picture, the picture does not seem so slow anymore. **MUSIC SPEEDS UP PICTURE.**

In the sc. where Kowalski is sitting in Ren's broken chair, there is no est. shot at all! The sc. just pans up to kowalski with no hold establishing the broken chair. We don't even see what Kowalski has done! Ren is mad at him but we're not sure why. He says it's the chair but we don't get a look at it, so it becomes confusing and unmotivated. The effect of this clumsy establishing is to make Ren look like merely an angry and mean father, exactly what you didn't want!

In the Picnic sc. the first shot is meant to establish the park and picnic ground and the mood of the sc.-a pastoral lazy afternoon with a happy family. There should be beautiful music to set-up th mood and we should see the welcome family outing. Well you don't even see the shot! It's on for 2 FT!

The second shot (The closer one) tells us about the sc. in more detail. We see Kowalski, this huge lumbering convict, dressed in a toddler's outfit. That's a joke. It's supposed to make you laugh, but it's not on long enough to sink in. We go right into the story again with no break, no pause, no entertainment value and no Transition from the previous sc. to this one.

TRANSITIONS

Will, I'm sure you'll back me on this one. Stories need transitions sometimes to connect contrasting ideas. To cut out transitions in a story is to confuse and disorient the audience. You never want the audience to ask, "How did we get from here to

there?" In "Fake Dad", this now happens a number of times. In the sc. prior to the Picnic Sc. Ren and Kowalski have just played out a wild emotional conflict of wills, complete with screaming and rage and temper tantrums. In the following sc's (the picnic) Ren is struggling to maintain his patience with Kowalski. He is trying to be nice to Kowalski. Why? In your cut we have just seen Kowalski destroy all of Ren's treasured possessions, including Stimpy, his "favorite friend". Why should he all of a sudden be trying to be nice to this guy? Because in the sc. where Stimpy was ground to a powder we found out that Stimpy was alright when he as mediator between Ren and Kowalski, chastises Ren for "upsetting his delicate psychological nature". He then continues by telling Ren, "Now you'll have to be extra nice to him." Thus the picnic scene starts and that is why Ren is trying to be nice to him. But how is the audience supposed to know this? You've cut out the transition!

Near the beginning of the cartoon, when we are trying to set-up the Idea that Ren & Stimpy (Particularly Ren) are eager to adopt a child for the weekend, we wrote and storyboarded a couple of sc's to illustrate Ren's need to share his love with a poor unfortunate lad without a home. The Fake-Dad Director evokes sympathy from R & S by telling them that "He hasn't had much love..." Then we should see the sympathetic looks on R & S's faces and play sympathetic music to show how sincere they both are. The shot is there, but just barely, it's been cut too tight. Then when the Director says that Ren is "Just the man who can turn him around", this is the key point, the premise of the entire story. What are Ren & Stimpy's

reactions to this challenge? THEY HAVE NO REACTIONS BECAUSE THE SCENE HAS BEEN CUT! In the board Stimpy agrees that Ren is the man to turn the lad around by saying with great confidence, "Oh he is, he is." And Ren tells us with complete sincerity, "Oh I am, I am." Without this sc. there is no transition from "You're just the man who can turn him around." to the sc. where Ren says "C'mon, bring in the little nipper." The sc. cut is blatantly abrupt. Something is obviously missing. And these few little sc's set up everything that is to follow, not only plot points, but the emotional basis for the story. Vanessa, this is supposed to make us sympathize with Ren. You wanted us to think that deep in his heart Ren really wanted to be good. This story set out to show this side of Ren and that justifiable circumstances led to Ren's temper; that he wasn't evil from within.

We put it into the story for you and made it the key element and you cut out the set-up that establishes it. Will, where are your story notes now? Why worry about story-logic in the outlines only to have it not appear on the screen?

seT-UPS AND PUNCH-LINES (PTM-CONSTITUTION GAGS)

HOLDS

MUSIC

SFX

MOODS, EMOTIONS

RAYMOND SCOTT